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ABSTRACT

Murstein's Stimulus-Value-Role theory of dyadic relationships, in which attraction depends on the exchange value of the assets and liabilities each person brings to the situation, is employed as a foundation for this review of the literature on interpersonal attraction in the counseling relationship. A three-stage model, accounting for both counselor and client attraction, as well as the growth or decline of attraction across the duration of the relationship, is presented in detail. Each stage (stimulus, value, role) of the model is depicted first from the perspective of the client, then from that of the counselor. The materials explain that existing data point to certain key variables as critical to maintaining the equity necessary for attraction at each stage of the developing relationship. These variables are presented, and the role of each in the development of counselor and client attraction is discussed. (Author/JAC)

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Interpersonal Attraction in the Counseling Relationship

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Running head: Interpersonal Attraction

Interpersonal Attraction in the Counseling Relationship

For the last twenty-five years, the study of interpersonal attraction has been a major focus for social psychologists. Many of the variables thought to play an important role in this phenomenon have been systematically studied, and a number of competing interpersonal attraction models--reinforcement models, exchange models, developmental models, cognitive models--have risen over the years to account for the proliferating data. None has won the day.

In the past decade, researchers interested in the counseling dyad have begun to turn their attention to the phenomenon of counselor-client attraction. The present study makes use of an extensive review of this counseling-related attraction research to extract and organize the key variables in counselor-client attraction. For the purposes of this review, a broad definition of the term "attraction" is employed. As Levinger and Snoek (1972) point out, "in current usage, the term 'attraction' may refer to attitudes or feelings, such as liking, love, satisfaction, affection, or respect, to behaviors, such as approach, affiliation, or manifest choice, and even to belongingness strategies. . . such as membership or attachment." In developing the perspective to be presented, the literature on attitudes, behaviors, and belongingness states indicative of counselor-client attraction was reviewed.

The ultimate goal of this paper is to evolve a model of the growth of attraction in the counseling relationship. An acceptable model

should capture the mutuality of this attraction. It should also depict the growth or decline of attraction across the entire life span of the relationship. The model should, therefore, be developmental and reciprocal in nature.

Of existing models, Murstein's (1970) Stimulus-Value-Role (SVR) theory does the best job of meeting the above criteria. Although originally designed to explain mate selection, it is applicable to any dyad developing in an open field, and, therefore, should be appropriate in an analysis of the counseling relationship.

SVR theory stresses exchange and equity within the dyadic relationship. In a relatively free choice situation, attraction depends on the exchange value of the assets and liabilities which each person brings to the situation. An on-going relationship passes through a series of three stages, and within each stage, equity is assessed with regard to a cluster of key characteristics (Murstein, 1976).

The first stage is the stimulus stage. Attraction, at this stage, is primarily dependent upon variables or cues that do not require verbal interaction. These variables include physical attractiveness, manner or style of dress, gender, and other non-sensory cues such as reputation or professional status. Further contact is sought when one perceives another as an equitable match in terms of the stimulus variables which are given highest priority.

After two individuals have come together, either by choice or circumstance, the second phase of the relationship begins to emerge, the

value stage (more precisely, the value comparison stage). Unlike the stimulus stage, the value stage is dependent upon verbal interaction. The transition from stimulus to value stage occurs at a point in the relationship when stimulus variables, as a group, become less important to the relationship than similarity in values, interests, attitudes, beliefs, etc. Each person can be seen as negotiating his/her way through this stage by periodically evaluating his/her comfortableness with the information both revealed and received. Consensus on the values important to the relationship is the primary function of the value stage. Each party's self-disclosures (values) are validated by the other and the relationship is then able to progress to the next and final stage.

The role stage of a relationship generally evolves after both parties have developed sufficient intimacy to reveal personal behaviors and/or personality characteristics. The primary function of this stage is the evaluation of both perceived and envisaged roles for oneself and one's partner in the dyad. Does the other play the role in question well enough to meet my relationship needs? Role compatibility, and not necessarily role similarity, is of primary importance at this stage of the relationship.

With that brief introduction to SVR theory, we will turn to an analysis of the counselor-client relationship. As with any on-going relationship, the three general phases occur as attraction develops. However, there are properties unique to the counseling dyad, and at each stage, the variables crucial to the growth of attraction may be distinct

from those having the most power in non-counseling relationships. The three stages will be depicted separately, first from the client's perspective, then from the counselor's.

Stimulus Stage

Client Attraction

Stimulus stage attraction often begins to build prior to the first counseling session. Presumably, in choosing a counselor, a potential client weighs various bits of information. When addressing the question of what they are looking for in a counselor, potential clients emphasize expertness and trustworthiness (Corrigan, 1978). They are seeking out someone with a level of training that would justify sharing their problems, with some confidence in effective assistance. They are less interested in evidence of personal attractiveness. A rule of thumb seems to be: As professional status goes down (psychiatrist to psychologist to counselor to friend), the importance given to information suggesting attractiveness goes up (Corrigan, 1978; Gelso and Karl, 1974; Strong, Hendel & Bratton, 1971).

Counselor gender also appears to be an important stimulus stage variable, even prior to face-to-face contact. The majority of help-seekers studied do have gender preferences with regard to choice of counselor, same-sex preferences being the predominant tendency (Fuller, 1964; Johnson, 1978). Moreover, for minorities, preferences for same-race counselors have been reported (Thompson & Cimbolic, 1978; Atkinson, Maruyama & Matsui, 1978). Age also appears an important stimulus

variable in counselor preference, with older counselors preferred by both men and women (Boulware & Holmes, 1970).

What, then, is the potential client looking for in choosing a counselor, what attracts him or her to one counselor over another? Most importantly, the potential client seems to be after credibility. This term is more encompassing than expertness. The client is not only attracted to a counselor with the appropriate academic degrees, reputation, and experience, he or she is also attending to signs that the counselor has credibility in addressing relevant concerns. Gender may be relevant in many cases, racial background in others. Entering counseling with a positive set that one is going to be seeing a credible counselor who is capable of relating to one's experiences enhances the development of attraction. The client is entering with the expectation of a potentially rewarding relationship.

Once a counselor is chosen or assigned, the client moves into the latter part of the stimulus stage, the initial encounter. First impressions formed at this point will affect feelings of attraction. In non-counseling dyads, it is clear that physical attractiveness is the most powerful variable governing attraction at this stage (Berscheid & Walster, 1974). In the counseling setting, physical attractiveness seems important but less critical to the growth of attraction than credibility.

Cash, Begley, McCown & Weise (1975) did find that the more attractive male counselor received significantly higher ratings on competence, trustworthiness, assertiveness, friendliness, intelligence, and likeli-

hood of producing a positive outcome. Lewis and Walsh (1978) extended these findings to include a female counselor, at least as seen by other women.

Carter (1978), however, found that within a normal range of physical attractiveness, gender may have a stronger influence than attractiveness on initial impressions and expectations. Carter concludes that the Cash, et al effect may be attributable more to the negative effect of a counselor lower in physical attractiveness than is usually found, to the positive power of the handsome condition. She suggests that "what is ugly is bad more than what is beautiful is good." Such a conclusion has support in non-counseling research (Byrne, London & Reeves, 1968) and in counseling-related research with nonprofessionals (Cash & Kerr, 1978).

Moreover, the debilitating effects of physical unattractiveness may be transitory at best. Cash and Salzbach (1978) demonstrate that the early use on the part of the counselor of demographic and personal self-disclosures can wipe out any negative effect of physical unattractiveness. Thus, early counselor behaviors may be able to quickly and easily override the inequity suffered by receiving an ugly counselor.

Two points need to be made with regard to the nature of the research being done on client stimulus stage attraction. First, it is almost all analogue research, employing either photographs or videotapes and non-client subjects. Such research has been criticized for its inability to answer questions of generalizability to the in vivo situation (Munley, 1974). This criticism must be taken very seriously in any study of

attitudinal variables like attraction. Such variables are certain to be affected by the kind of emotional arousal found only in real clients placed in an actual counseling setting.

Slotlow and Allen (1981) demonstrate the validity of the above assumption in a uniquely designed study which compared impressions of subjects viewing counselor videotapes a la Cash, et al. with the impressions of subjects having direct one-to-one counseling experience with the same counselors. In vivo contact produced significantly more positive impressions than did the non-participating observation of the counselor. More studies need to focus on bridging the gap between the highly controlled laboratory analogy and the uncontrolled naturalistic study.

A second criticism focuses on the lack of attention given to the relative nature of personal attraction. That is, functional attraction (attraction which might actually guide behavior) arises not just from an assessment of the other's attributes, rather from a comparison of one's own stimulus value with that of the other (Berscheid, Dion, Walster, and Walster, 1971). No counseling-related attraction research has made use of relativistic ratings. One finds an indication of the importance of relativism, however, in research on another stimulus variable--counselor attire.

Stillman and Resnick (1972), using an absolute rating system and two conditions of counselor attire, found no effect of attire on perceived counselor attractiveness. Similarly, Kerr and Dell (1976) and Amira and Abramowitz (1979) found no effect. However, Hubble and Gelso (1978),

employing three levels of counselor attire (highly casual, casual, and traditional) and asking subjects to indicate how they themselves typically dressed, found that the client's own dress relative to the counselor's attire functioned as a crucial moderator variable. That is, "clients manifest the most desireable reactions to counselors who dress in a way that is one step or level more formal than the client's own dress level."

Such a finding, though focusing on what is probably a minor stimulus variable, is easily explainable by exchange theory. One seeks the best deal one can get. A client comes to counseling seeking credibility. He/She does not expect to receive the credibility of Sigmund Freud (unless the client has grandiose images of his/her own stimulus value). He/She does look for indications of credibility that is at a higher level than can be found among friends or that is possessed by oneself.

The pre-eminence of perceived credibility over perceived attractiveness variables appears to continue throughout the stimulus stage for the client. It is also positively related to ultimate counseling outcome. La Crosse (1980), using a sample of actual clients, examined the relationship between client ratings of counselor expertness, trustworthiness, and attractiveness made after an initial session as well as after counseling and a measure of counseling outcome. Although all ratings correlated significantly with outcome, initial perception of counselor expertness was the most powerful single predictor of counseling outcome. Ratings of expertness subsequent to a first session accounted for 31% of total outcome variance.

Stimulus stage client attraction, therefore, seems woven out of a cluster of variables indicative of counselor credibility. If credibility is perceived during the stimulus stage, the counselee is attracted to further contact with the counselor. If credibility is lacking, attraction will be minimal and the probability of a positive counseling outcome reduced.

Counselor Attraction

Schofield (1964) first postulated a preferred client type--the YAVIS (young, attractive, verbal, intelligent, and successful). Few counselors would argue against the fact that there is a bias in favor of working with such a population. However, the rationale given for such a bias is usually that the YAVIS client is more amenable to therapeutic processes as they exist today, that is, such a client is more capable of gaining insight through a verbal therapeutic process. Less often does a counselor admit that he/she is simply more attracted to working with a YAVIS client and, thus, will be more motivated to give better service. Yet this would seem to be what is happening.

O'Leary, Donovan, Cheney, and O'Leary (1979), employing an extensive evaluation process with an alcoholic population, found that of over forty demographic, personality, and cognitive variables, "the variable found to be most predictive of staff members' decisions as to suitability of a client for treatment was their perception of the patients' interpersonal attractiveness." Moreover, Wright and Hutten (1977), employing an actress/client who differentially presented herself as of high and low status,

found that in the low status condition, the counselor's estimate that the client would benefit from long-term counseling was significantly dependent upon the counselor's self-reported liking for the client. Mazer (1979), moreover, reports that attitude similarity does not influence pre-counseling clinical judgments, however, attractiveness ratings are significantly related to ratings of insight, motivation, emotional maturity, self-observation, and prognosis.

The above research suggests that the counselor during the stimulus stage, both prior to contact and after, is assessing and responding to interpersonal attractiveness. This is, however, a very global term. What, more specifically, constitutes an interpersonally attractive client?

It would seem that, once again, physical attractiveness is not the most powerful component. Brown (1970), looking at the relationship between first session ratings and subsequent outcome ratings, concluded that "although the index of physical attractiveness was not significantly related to any outcome variable, the index of counselor personal liking for the client was related to counselor satisfaction with client progress, his techniques, and his perception of client satisfaction." Barocas and Vance (1974) offer further clues as to the make-up of counselor stimulus stage attraction. They found overall attractiveness to be related to interview performance, initial clinical status, final clinical status, and prognosis. More specifically, they broke down attractiveness into four categories: Interpersonal approach, grooming and attire, tone of voice, and speech pattern. For both male and female clients as rated by

male and female counselors, either tone of voice or speech pattern emerge as the most significant correlates of overall attractiveness ratings. Thus, in a highly verbal setting like counseling, verbal cues may be critical variables in counselee attractiveness and, therefore, counselor attraction.

During the stimulus stage, what then does the counselor seem to be looking for, what makes a given counseling relationship potentially more attractive? The counselor seems to be asking, "Is this a person to whom I would enjoy talking?" Counseling is essentially a verbal activity, and, therefore for the counselor, over and above pay, painless and even, at times, enjoyable verbal exchanges are a primary reward. If the counselor in the stimulus stage sees the potential for such exchanges, then equity can exist and attraction develop. However, if the counselor envisions unpleasant exchanges or frustrating "tooth-pulling" sessions, then aversion will predominate and referral, the foreshortening of counseling (referred to in the trade as minimal change counseling), or interfering counter-transference feelings will result.

Value Stage

Client Attraction

Information received prior to counseling as to counselor attitude or value similarity does not seem to affect either the choice of a counselor (Gaynor, 1976) or later ratings of attraction toward the counselor (Goldstein, 1971; Cheney, 1975). Presumably at this time, stimulus stage credibility factors are of overriding importance. However, once the

counselor and the client begin a meaningful exploration of the presenting problem, the importance of counselor credibility to ongoing client attraction begins to decline. In the non-counseling dyad, attraction then becomes contingent on perceived value similarity. In the counseling setting, however, there is an inequity at this stage. The expectation exists that the client will disclose, or be subject to questioning about, his/her values, while the counselor need not reveal nearly as much information.

When value-relevant, counselor information is forthcoming, the effect on client attraction is significant (Beutler, 1979). Value-similar counselors are rated as more attractive, trustworthy, and better choices for a continual counseling relationship (Lewis & Walsh, 1980). Moreover, satisfaction with the relationship is greater when clients, during the initial interview, perceive themselves as similar in values and life-style preferences to their counselor (Tessler, 1975). Beutler (1972) concludes, however, in reviewing the relevant literature on value similarity, that a mid-range of value similarity may be most conducive to ultimate client attitude change. That is, some amount of value dissimilarity is necessary to produce movement.

In terms of effect on client attraction, the act of counselor self-disclosure itself appears relationship-enhancing, regardless of the amount of similarity disclosed. Self-disclosing counselors are viewed as more attractive, regardless of level of expertness, than non-disclosing counselors (Merluzzi, Banikeotes, & Missbach, 1978). Bundza & Simonson (1973) report that self-disclosing counselors are perceived as more nurturing and elicit a greater willingness for reciprocal disclosure. Cash and Salzbach

(1978) found disclosure effects to be additive with physical attractiveness effects on nearly all attribution and expectancy variables measured.

Intermediate frequencies of counselor disclosure appear to be most desireable. Middle range frequencies of disclosure produce the highest client ratings of counselor willingness to be known, warmth, friendliness, and understanding (Murphy & Strong, 1972), as well as client willingness to return for a second interview (Giannandrea & Murphy, 1973). Moreover, both similar and dissimilar disclosures are able to enhance perceived levels of counselor empathy, warmth, and congruence and to produce significantly higher levels of reciprocal disclosure (Mann & Murphy, 1975).

It is postulated that client attraction in the value stage is contingent on the receipt of validation from the counselor. The counselee is attracted to the counselor who accepts and approves of the client as a person and who validates the client's interpretation of his/her problem. Counselor disclosures per se allow the client more ready access to the counselor's world view and, more importantly, the counselor's attitude toward the presenting problem and the client. The undisclosing counselor creates a frustrating barrier between the client and this information. To the degree that such disclosures communicate similarity, perceived consensus and, thus, validation is further enhanced.

Disclosures that are too frequent seem to create a sense of inequity. They are perceived as role-playing and as barriers to getting to know the counselor as a person (Murphy & Strong, 1972). Moreover, it is hypothesized that, during the value stage, disclosures which are too personal or intimate may also have a negative effect on attraction. Weigel, Dinges,

Dyer & Straumfjorn (1972) report negative reactions to self-disclosing counselors in an intense group therapy setting. On the other hand, disclosures which are self-involving, that is, which communicate the helper's personal response to helpee statements produce higher ratings of expertness, attractiveness, and trustworthiness than do disclosures which are simply informative (McCarthy & Betz, 1978).

It would seem, therefore, that attaining the frequency and level of counselor disclosure which will enhance perceived validation and client attraction is part of the fine art of counseling. Counselors employing self-disclosure as a tool in relationship-building may be running the risk of producing negative affect. For this reason, counselors often make use of less direct, yet safer, means of communicating the validation necessary for value stage attraction.

Counselor warmth is associated with client attraction at this stage (Lee, 1975). Warmth is communicated both nonverbally and verbally. LaCrosse (1975) found that nonverbal affiliative behaviors such as smiles, positive head nods, gesticulations, 80% eye contact, direct angle of shoulder orientation, and a 20° forward body lean produced higher ratings of attractiveness and persuasiveness than did less affiliative nonverbal behaviors. On the verbal side, Helms (1976) reported a positive relationship between empathy-enhancing statements and attraction. Empathic statements and nonverbal messages of approval serve to enhance the clients' feeling of validation. Not only is the counselor clearly understanding and accepting the client's presentation of the problem, he/she seems to be sharing in and validating the client's perceptions. Similarity is

inferred and value stage attraction is enhanced. Counselors who ignore or fly in the face of their clients' desire for validation are probably setting themselves up for rejection or failure in the role phase.

Counselor Attraction

As the counseling dyad moves into a dialogue, client attractiveness continues to have some diminishing effect on counselors. It affects both counselors' attitude toward the potential longevity of the relationship and their willingness to engage in relationship-facilitating dialogue. Schwartz and Abramovitz (1978) reported that, at the end of a brief intake interview, male counselors rated less attractive female clients as more likely to terminate prematurely and less likely to receive relationship-building responses from their counselors. However, from the perspective of a number of other variables measured, these authors concluded that their "results did not reveal an overwhelming pattern of prejudice against the relatively unattractive client."

It is postulated by the stage model presented in this paper that once meaningful dialogue is under way, the key to enhanced counselor attraction shifts over to client self-exploration. Carkhuff (1969) describes client self-exploration, at its highest level, as an active and spontaneous probing to discover new feelings and experiences about oneself and one's world. Such behavior appears important to both counselor motivation and the avoidance of premature termination.

Saltzman, Leutgert, Roth, Creaser, and Howard (1976) had counselors and clients rate their experience along ten dimensions after each session. At the end of the first session, three counselor ratings discriminated

between those clients who ultimately remained in treatment and those who dropped out: Involvement--the counselor's sense of concern for the client and his/her sense of an active participation in the client's exploration; responsibility--the counselor's assessment of the extent to which the client relies on him/herself to solve his/her problems; and, movement--the counselor's assessment of the extent to which the client is able to come to grips with his/her problems and make progress in solving them.

The above authors conclude that "All of these suggest a sensitivity on the part of therapist to the cues that almost directly indicate whether or not a productive collaboration is or is not being formed. When they feel themselves involved with the client and when they feel, further, that the client is working actively on the solution of his/her problems, then the likelihood is increased that the client will remain in treatment."

A counselor is attracted to, and more involved with, the client who, as early as the first session, exhibits such self-exploratory behaviors. If self-exploration comes from a client who also happens to be high in interpersonal attractiveness, then counselor attraction is even greater. This makes the validation necessary for client attraction easier and more genuine.

Role Stage

Client Attraction

In all probability, the counseling dyad fairly quickly moves into the role stage. The nature of the relationship is more clearly defined than in most non-counseling dyads. One need not sort out whether the other person is to be acquaintance, teacher, friend, lover, mentor, or mate. It

is clear that the client is expecting professional psychological assistance. One might assume that by the second or third session, if not earlier, role variables become critical to on-going attraction.

For the relationship to reach this stage, however, and for attraction to build during this stage, it seems that the client must emerge from the prior stages emotionally aroused. This arousal may take the form of anxiety or distress upon entry into the counseling relationship. In the Saltzman, et al. study, the only client rating at the end of the first session which was predictive of return vs. dropout was a high level of anxiety.

Schaeffer and Abeles (1977), comparing ratings of client attraction and distress with observer ratings of level of experiencing during a second interview, found distressed clients to produce higher levels of experiencing than non-distressed clients. The only clients producing even higher levels of experiencing were the non-distressed clients who were attracted to their counselors. Fiester (1977) found that the factor most common to therapists with high attrition rates was Client Inhibition/Client Involvement. Counselors with high attrition rates are apparently unable to generate involvement.

Such results would suggest that arousal may be attained in one of two ways--either by distress upon entry or by arousal through attraction to the counselor. In either case, such arousal seems to facilitate the motivation to return and the level of self-exploration within a session.

As Byrne, Allgeier, Winslow, and Buckman (1975) point out "emotional arousal elicits the need for consensual validation." The client who enters counseling aroused wants expert assistance in either relabeling that

arousal or in validating the existing interpretation. The client who becomes aroused during counseling wants help in attributing these feelings. By the end of the value stage these two steps--what Byrne, et al. call arousal and sharing--should have occurred. Yet Byrne, et al. postulate and demonstrate in a number of non-counseling situations that a third factor is necessary for attraction toward a stranger: Out-of-role behavior; that is, behavior which does not adhere to stereotypic role expectations.

It seems paradoxical that the key ingredient for enhanced attraction in the role phase would be out-of-role behavior. Yet when one examines the situation more closely, such a hypothesis becomes more tenable. During the early stages of counseling, the counselor needs to adhere to stereotypic role expectations for attraction enhancement.

These role expectations seem to be best met by either a behavioral or insight-oriented approach (Fancher & Gatkin, 1971; Holen & Kinsey, 1975). With either of these styles, the counselor dons an expert role, one which emphasizes credibility. However, we have seen from the previous analysis that the warmth and openness of Rogerian/Carkhuffian response styles are attraction-building as counseling progresses, though possibly not meeting initial client expectations. What is expected in the final phase of counseling, what will enhance the client's view of the counselor at this point?

There is a role expectation that eventually the counselor will produce some "magic" to ease the situation. Many counselors attempt to ignore or disavow this expectation. There has been of late, however, some

recognition of the fact that some counselors are able to structure the magic necessary to meet this role expectation (Bandler & Grinder, 1975). By the term "magic" we are really referring to the client's expectation that the counselor's expertize gives him/her access to some body of knowledge beyond the client's ken and that eventually this knowledge will reveal itself in some unanticipated counselor behavior, out-of-role behavior.

What forms may such behavior take? Unexpectedly intimate self-disclosure may be one. Confrontation may be another. Any of the therapeutic techniques flowing out of some therapeutic school or another may constitute out-of-role behavior. The intuitive leap that some counselors seem capable of may serve this function.

Whatever the form, such behavior has the potential to move the relationship to a higher plane than has been achieved. Of course, it also has the potential of having a debilitating effect. The counselor and client have shared an unexpected experience or exchange. Such an experience, if well-timed, after credibility and validation are in place, can create a stronger foundation for client attraction and, therefore, counselor influence. If out-of-role behavior occurs prematurely it may be seen as inappropriate, not genuine, or gimmicky. Client attraction will diminish. It is postulated that many counseling relationships never move beyond the value stage or self-destruct as a result of premature out-of-role behavior.

Counselor Attraction

Ratings of client likeability made subsequent to treatment are significantly correlated with client change (Orlinsky & Howard, 1978). Though this paper is not concerned with outcome or change per se, it does become a relevant issue during the role phase. It is hypothesized that counselor attraction during this stage becomes contingent on evidence of client change.

Appropriate role behavior on the part of a client eventually must involve a change component. Most counselors see as their task the induction of some form of change. The client who, though productive in terms of self-exploration, shows no evidence of movement frustrates the counselor's role expectations. Sessions begin to seem repetitious, and there is a diminished sense of equity.

Strong (1968) posits that the net effect of early counseling behavior and attitudes is to create a power base from which to influence clients. Strong (1970) emphasizes that this social influence process involves the presentation by the counselor of discrepant information (out-of-role behavior) which induces in the client some form of causal re-attribution. Certainly attribution theory describes one form of change which counseling is capable of producing. It would seem, however, that, for the purpose of increased counselor attraction, any evidence of movement is helpful. This may come in the form of reports of behavior change outside sessions, improved descriptions of mental states, improved relationships, novel depictions and interpretations of one's problems, positive reinforcement of

counselor effectiveness or even a change in the content of the sessions.

All of the above behaviors may have the potential of producing added arousal or motivation on the part of the counselor. Continued counselor involvement seems critical to on-going counselor/client relationships, even as late as the fifth session (Saltzman, et al.). Many counseling relationships may terminate as a result of counselor boredom and reduced attraction resulting from insufficient evidence of client change.

Conclusion

Murstein's three-stage, equity theory of dyadic relationships has been used as a framework for a review of studies relating to both counselor and client attraction. This review has produced a model for conceptualizing the key variables affecting the growth of mutual attraction in counseling over time. The proposed model is depicted in Figure 1.

During the stimulus stage of the relationship, client attraction is primarily dependent on a perception of the counselor as a credible expert in the area of concern. Counselor attraction is a function of client attractiveness, particularly interpersonal attractiveness. If a mutual sense of equity is established at this point, the relationship will move into the value stage, where client attraction becomes contingent on a sense of validation, and counselor attraction is related to the willingness of the client to engage in self-exploration. With a sense of equity at the value phase comes a shift in attention to mutual role expectations. Client attraction can be further enhanced by counselor out-of-role behavior, while counselor attraction becomes dependent on evidence of change.

Existing data seem amenable to the above analysis, and the proposed model suggests numerous hypotheses for further research explorations. There is a particular need for research on counselor/client perceptions of one another beyond the point of first acquaintance, into later stages of the relationship. There is also an absence of any research which captures the mutuality of feeling (Levinger & Snoek, 1972) that must be present in the equitable counseling relationship. Hopefully, the model presented in this paper will be a heuristic tool in steering counseling process researchers into new avenues.

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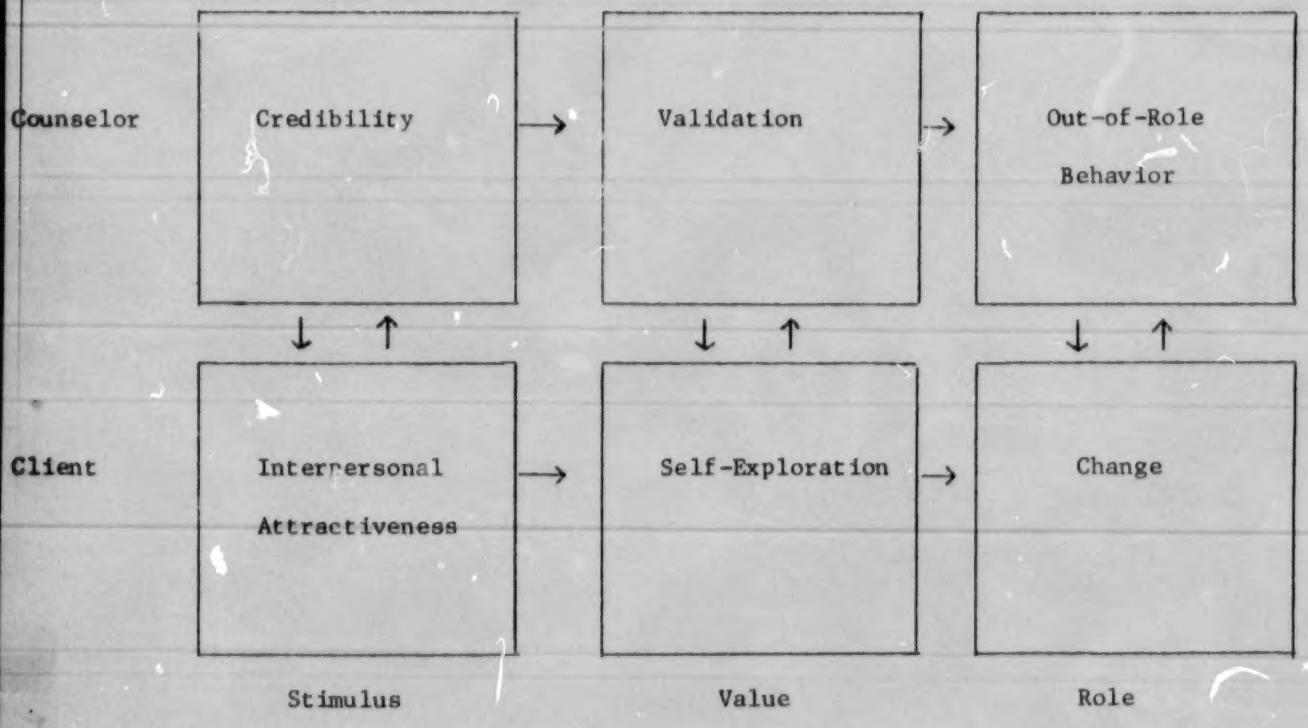
Figure Caption

Figure 1. Variable clusters critical to equity and attraction at each stage of the counseling relationship.


Counselor
Credibility
Validation
Out-of-Role Behavior
Client
Interpersonal Attractiveness
Self-Exploration
Change
Stimulus
Value
Role